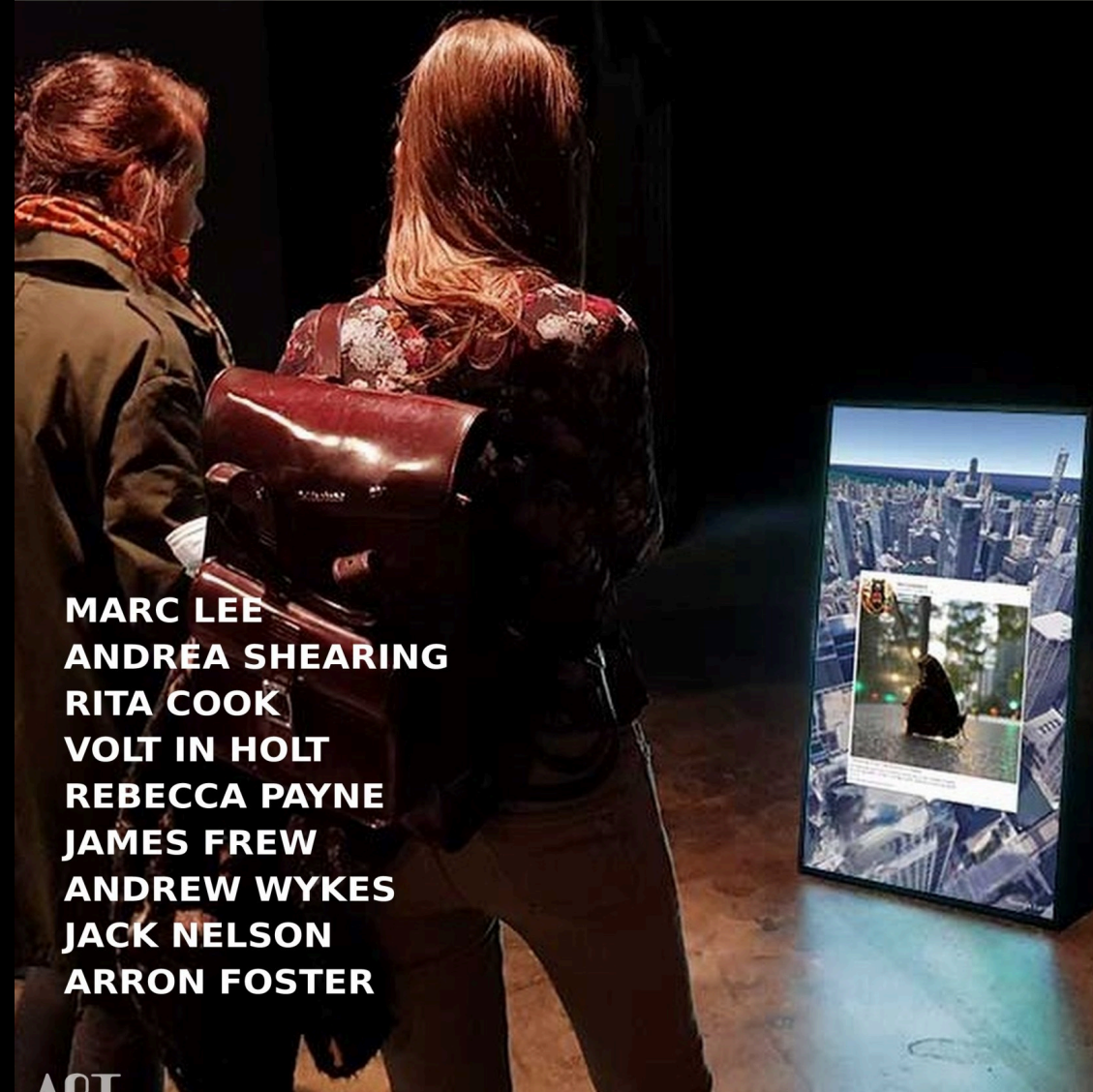


# LandEscape

CONTEMPORARY ART REVIEW

Anniversary Edition



**MARC LEE**  
**ANDREA SHEARING**  
**RITA COOK**  
**VOLT IN HOLT**  
**REBECCA PAYNE**  
**JAMES FREW**  
**ANDREW WYKES**  
**JACK NELSON**  
**ARRON FOSTER**

Land *E*scape  
CONTEMPORARY  
ART REVIEW

 @landscapeartreview

LandEscape meets

# Marc Lee

*Marc Lee is a Swiss artist. He is creating network-oriented interactive art projects: interactive installations, media art, internet art, performance art, video art, augmented reality (AR) art, virtual reality (VR) art and mobile apps. He is experimenting with information and communication technologies and within his contemporary art practice, he reflects critically creative, cultural, social, ecological and political aspects. His artworks reflect the visions and limits of our information society in an intelligent manner and question this critically.*

*His works are exhibited in major Museums and new media art exhibitions including: ZKM Karlsruhe, New Museum New York, Transmediale Berlin, Ars Electronica Linz, HMKV Dortmund, HEK Basel, Fotomuseum Winterthur, Read\_Me Festival Moscow, CeC Dehli, MoMA Shanghai, ICC Tokyo, Nam June Paik Art Center, Media Art Biennale and MMCA Seoul.*

*Marc Lee is lecturing, teaching and holding workshops about art and software art in many schools including the China Academy of Art (CAA) Hangzhou, Strelka Moscow, Shanghai Institute of Visual Art (SIVA), National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (MMCA) Seoul and ZHdK Zurich.*

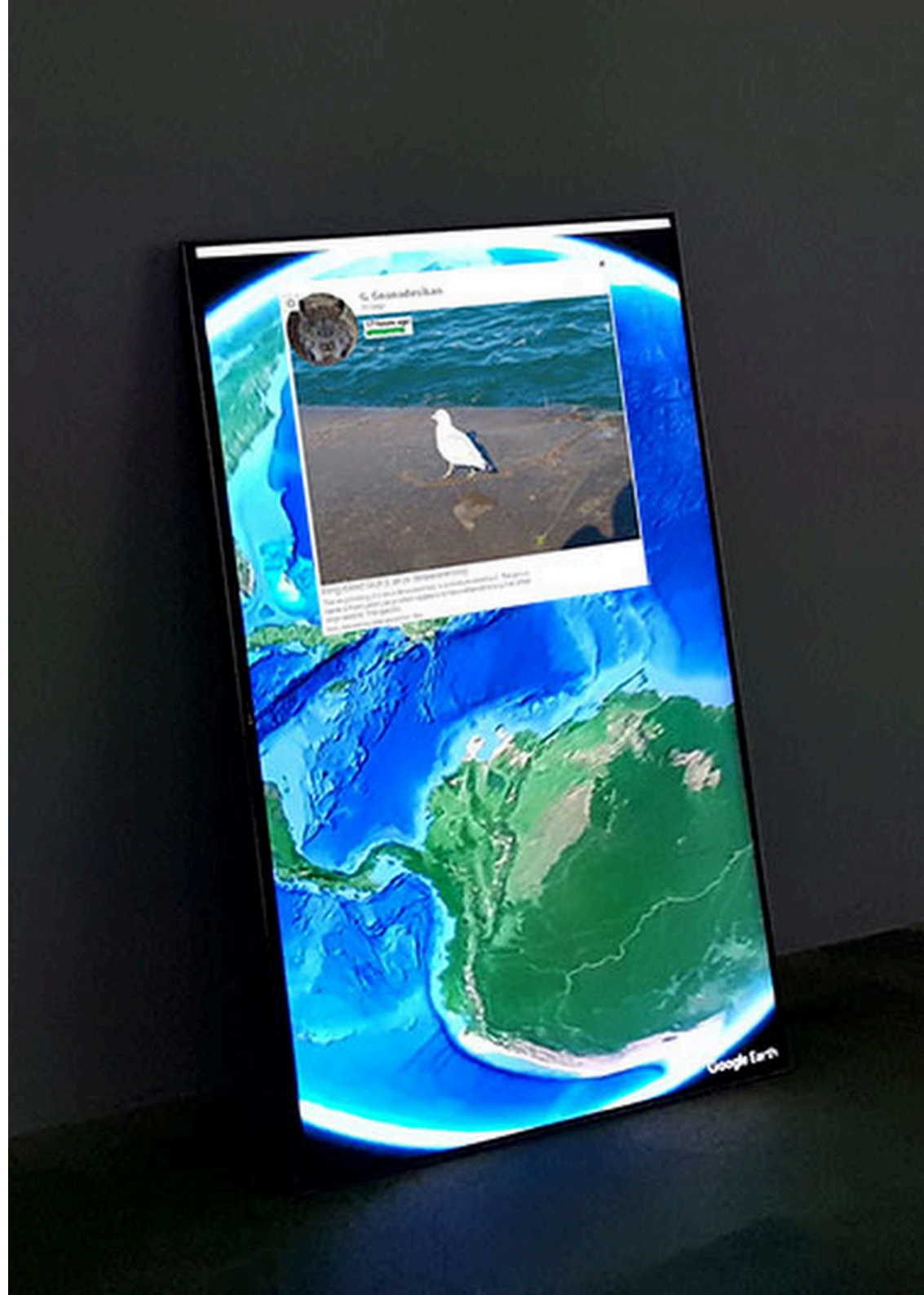
*He has won many prizes and honorary mentions at international festivals, including "Interaction" and "Software" Awards at Transmediale Berlin and the Social-Media-Art-Award at Phaenomenale Wolfsburg. His art projects are in private and public collections like the Swiss Confederation Federal Art Collection Bern, HEK Basel, Fotomuseum Winthertur and the ZKM Karlsruhe.*

**m** @marcleio

An interview by **Ralph Landau**, curator  
and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator  
[landescape@euronc.com](mailto:landescape@euronc.com)

**Hello Marc. We already got the chance  
to introduce our readers to your**

**artworks in a previous edition and we  
are now particularly pleased to discover  
the development of your artistic  
production. For this special edition, we  
have selected Used to Be *My* Home Too,**





a stimulating project that our reader can view at <https://marclee.io/en/used-to-be-my-home-too>. We are struck by how this methodology reinforces your message, making the viewer an active participant in the ongoing narrative of species loss and environmental change. When walking our readers through the genesis of *Used to Be My Home Too*, what did inspire you to use crowdsourced data as a medium for artistic expression?

**Marc Lee:** I am grateful for this invitation and feel honored. Prior to this, you published an article about our project, *10,000 Moving Cities - Same but Different*, which presents a multifaceted analysis of the local, cultural and linguistic nuances of urban environments. Additionally, it illuminates the ways in which cities are becoming increasingly homogenous as a consequence of globalization.

*Used to Be My Home Too* is similar in multiple ways: both projects deal with homogenization and loss of diversity; both use crowdsourced data in real-time; and both constantly change and adapt. In traditional photography and video art, it's an artist group or single artist who decides what will be shown. Using user-generated content, people all over the world receive a voice by sharing their thoughts and stories on social networks. They offer personal perspectives from their immediate

surroundings, providing windows into a changing world.

Collectively, these posts provide a comprehensive picture of the world that becomes part of the artwork. The viewer engages with this artwork by



witnessing and reflecting on the social movements of our time. In this way, we are able to contemplate our lives, hopes, wishes, and especially the culture of the younger generation - perhaps in a more contemporary

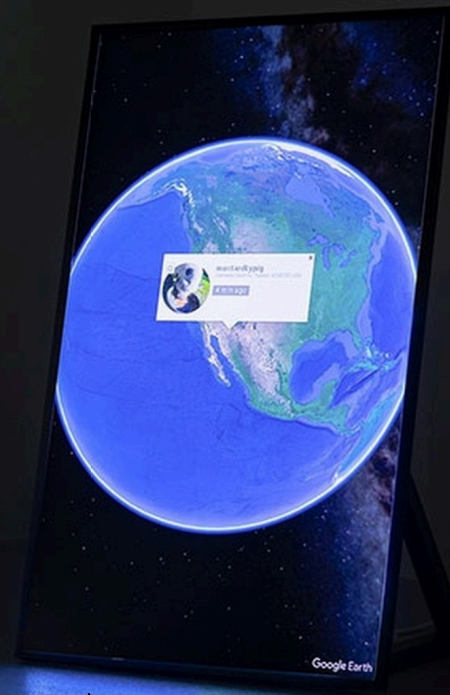
manner than through traditional art forms.

These artworks change continuously, like nature, reflecting the dynamic social landscape they represent.



**We really appreciate the way *Used to Be My Home Too* highlights both the richness and fragility of our ecosystems. How do you hope this *real-time visualization* will impact viewers' perceptions of biodiversity loss?**

**Marc Lee:** In the best possible way, viewers would be reflecting on biodiversity, its loss and the extinction of species from a bird's perspective. *Used to Be My Home Too* displays photos of animals, fungi, and plants



that are uploaded in real-time by anonymous users to [iNaturalist.org](http://iNaturalist.org) via mobile phones. These images are mapped on Google Earth at the exact locations where they were photographed. Additionally,

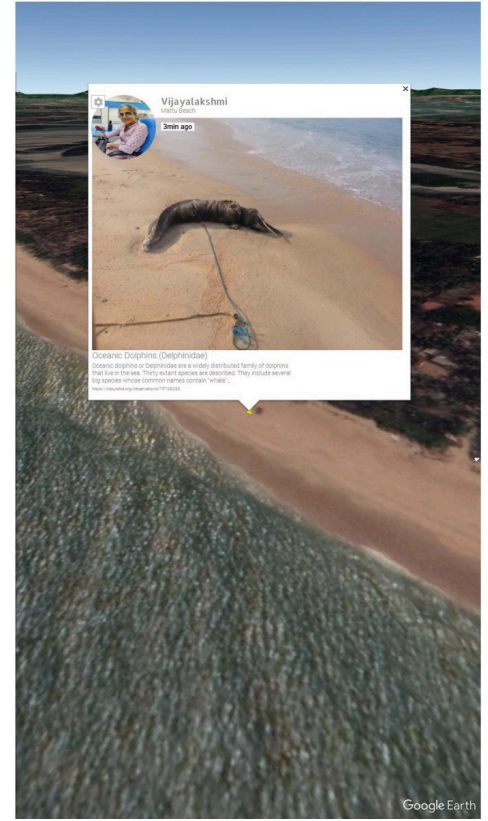
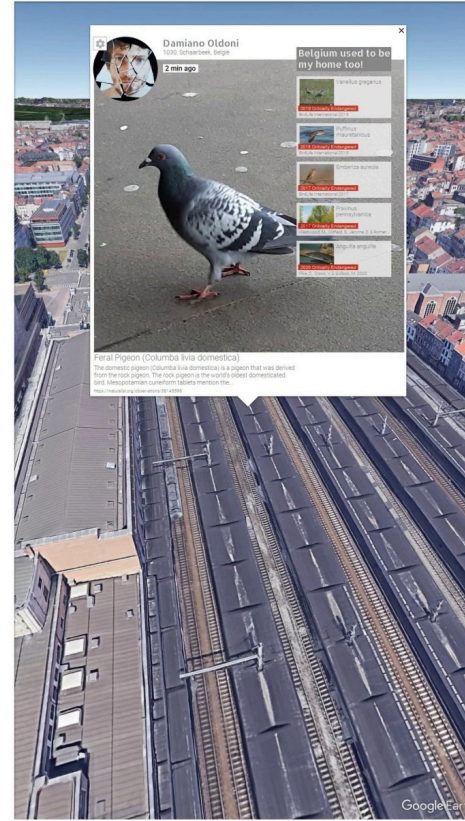
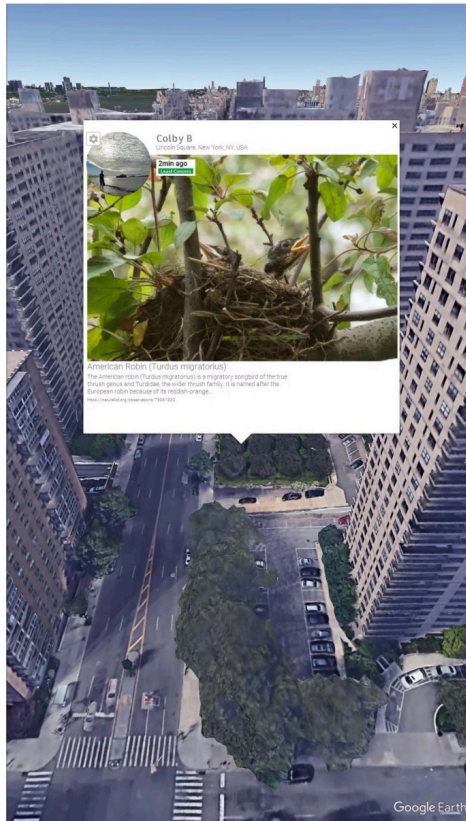
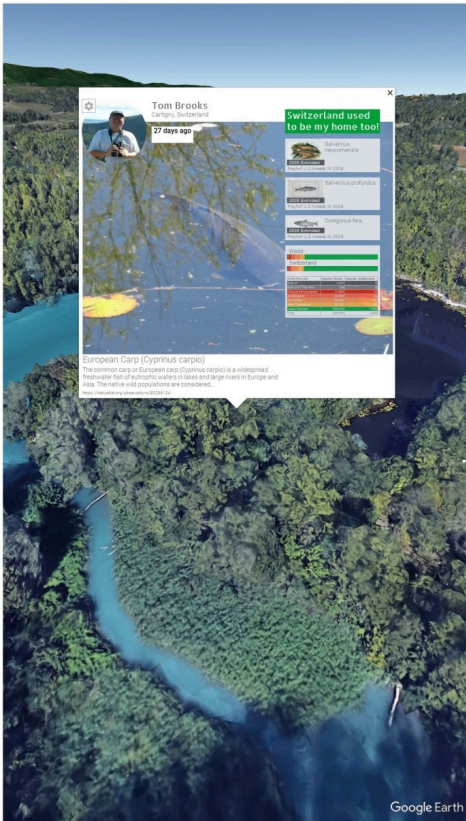
taxonomically similar species that occurred in the same country and became extinct within the last 30 years are automatically added in real-time via RedList.org.

**The title *Used to Be My Home Too* is quite evocative, since it immediately frames the narrative of species loss. Can you tell us more about how you arrived at this title? In particular, is important for you that the title tells something that *might walk the viewers through their visual experience*?**

**Marc Lee:** The viewer virtually flies to the location where the observation was made, for example, in Switzerland. The text "Switzerland used to be my home too" then appears, and taxonomically similar species that occurred in Switzerland and became extinct in the last 30 years are automatically added. When we consider the scientific figures showing how many species we are losing daily-species that have evolved over millions of years-and reflect deeply on this process, it's profoundly moving. It's arguably one of the most devastating occurrences in our time. Given the delicate nature of this subject, we chose a gentle title and aimed to present the information without moralizing.

**We're intrigued by the real-time aspect of *Used to Be My Home Too*. It's a**





powerful way to illustrate the dynamic nature of biodiversity. Could you share your thoughts on the importance of this *live element*? We'd be particularly interested to hear how you think it changes the viewer's experience compared to more static

representations of species loss.

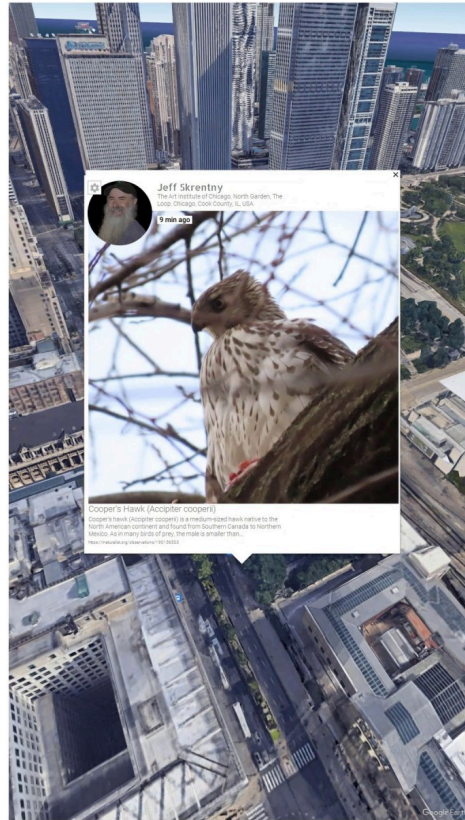
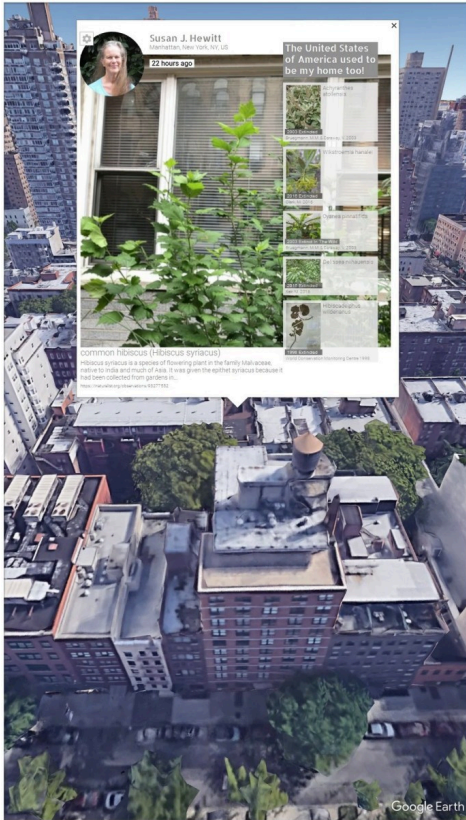
**Marc Lee:** Our world is fundamentally biological, characterized by constant change and adaptation. Through technologies like printing, photography, and video, humans attempt

to preserve aspects of life that are inherently dynamic in nature. Almost all of our projects are generative, as we aim to focus on the fluid nature of reality rather than on capturing and preserving static moments. Developing such projects is particularly

exciting because it allows for continuous discovery of new aspects and perspectives, ensuring that no experience is ever exactly replicated.

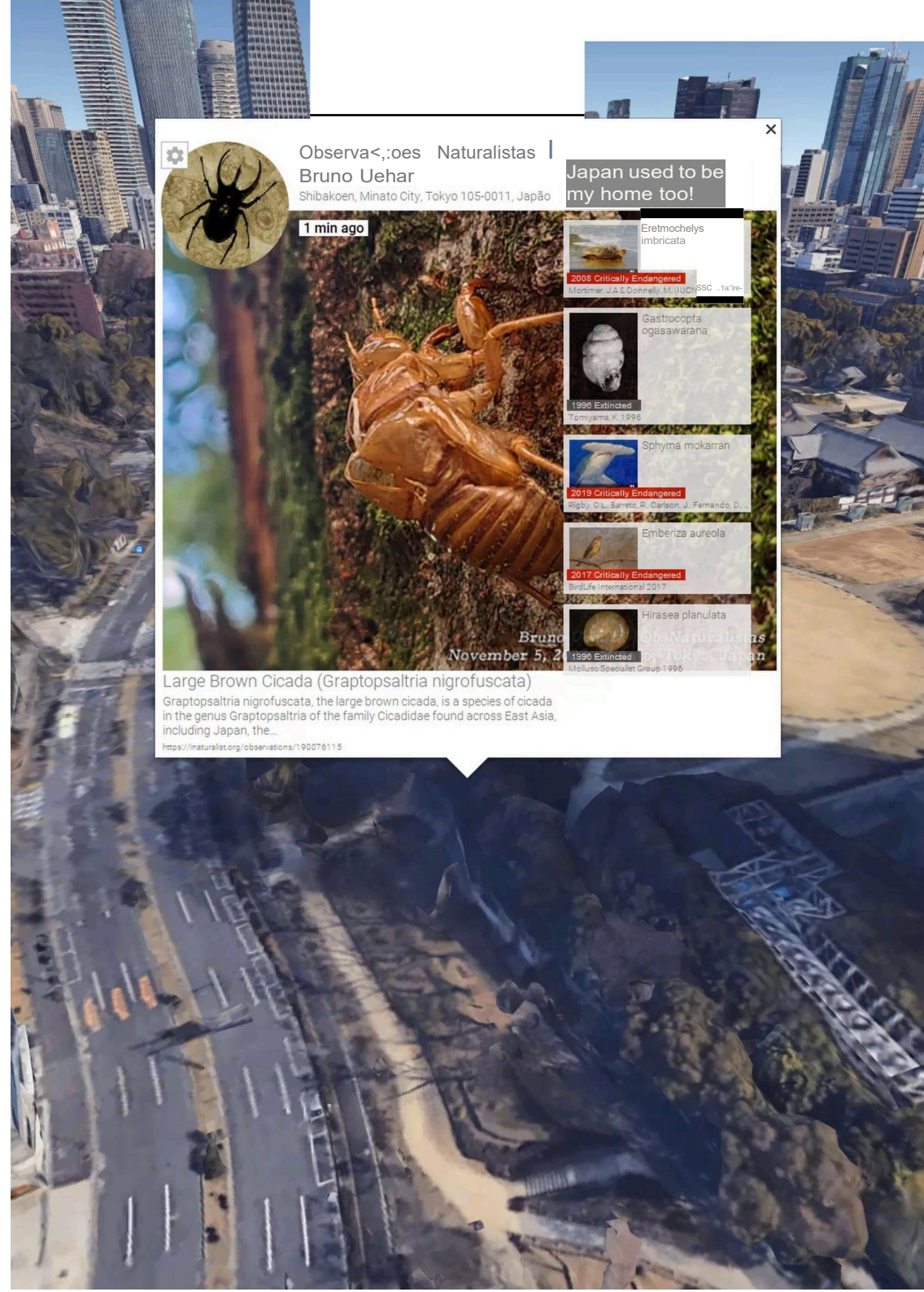
**Used to Be *My Home Too* seems to touch on themes of presence and**





absence, visibility and invisibility in nature, and it makes the unseen seen through technology. We're especially interested in how you think this technological mediation of nature might affect our relationship with the natural world.

**Marc Lee:** Technologies such as webcams, virtual reality, and robotic animals enable remote experiences of nature, augmenting our perception by providing access to distant or inaccessible natural environments. While these technologies can enhance





our connection to nature, they may also result in superficial experiences, substituting real-world encounters with mediated ones. For instance, watching a live stream of a coral reef might not fully capture the sensory richness of actually snorkeling in one. Technological mediation can both enrich and challenge our connection to the natural world. As we navigate this evolving relationship, balancing its benefits and risks is crucial.

**Relying heavily on user-generated content from [iNaturalist.org](https://www.inaturalist.org). Used to *Be My Home Too* harnesses the power of collective observation through platforms like iNaturalist.org. We really value how this democratizes the process of scientific observation and integrates it into an artistic context. Could you share your thoughts on the potential of crowdsourced data in art? Additionally, how do you think this approach might evolve in the future, both in your own work and in the broader art world?**

**Marc Lee:** Collective observation and crowdsourced data have immense potential, transforming complex information into interactive and aesthetic knowledge graphs or artworks. Artificial intelligence and machine learning exemplify this approach and its rapid expansion. However, we must adopt a critical stance and highlight the numerous drawbacks these technologies entail. This is



particularly crucial as IT companies often overlook or conceal these disadvantages, presumably because addressing them does not generate revenue.

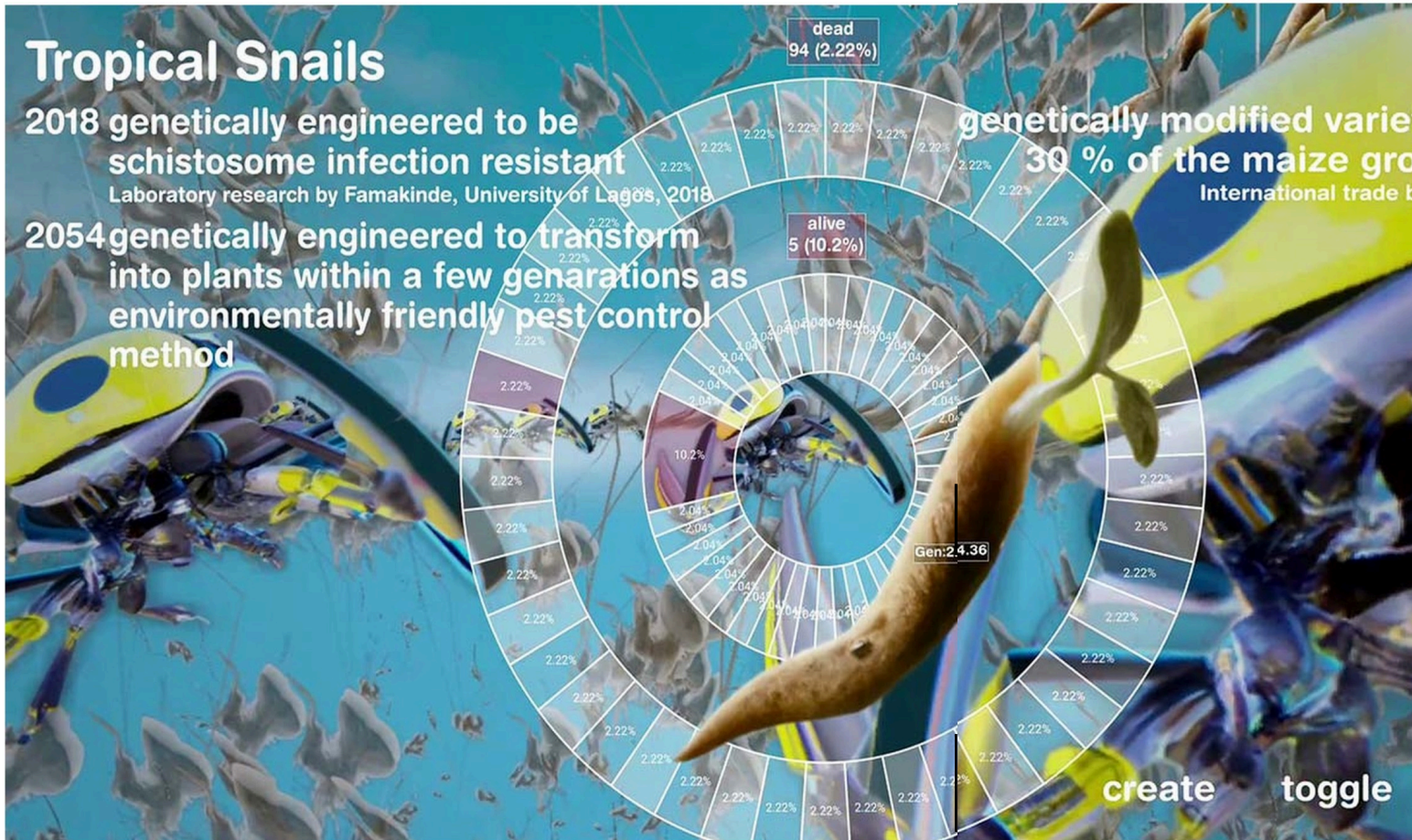
**How do you balance the desire to**

**challenge your audience with the need to engage them emotionally or aesthetically?**

**Marc Lee:** This is an insightful question. Achieving this balance is what defines a

successful project. It presents the most significant challenge for me and requires constant reassessment. The process involves embracing vulnerability, sharing authentic emotions, using empathy as a guiding





how effectively can the artistic avant-garde galvanize public consciousness?

**Marc Lee:** This approach requires a delicate balance between presenting facts in an engaging manner without moralizing. Through innovative and boundary-pushing expressions, art can provoke critical reflections on humanity's impact, challenge prevailing attitudes toward nature, consumerism, and industrialization, and ultimately inspire urgent action. It can serve as an early warning system, compelling us to confront the gravity of our existential predicament.

Used to Be *My Home Too* has been internationally showcased in many occasions, including HEK, Basel, CAFA Art Museum, Beijing and Digital Arts Festival, Athens. As the move of Art from traditional gallery spaces, to street and especially to online platforms - as Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/marcleeeio> - increases, how would in your opinion change the relationship with a globalised audience and how do you envision the role of physical exhibitions versus online presentations in showcasing your work?

**Marc Lee:** Physical exhibitions remain essential for immersive encounters, while online presentations amplify

principle, resonating deeply, and striving to connect with viewers on a profound level.

Your artistic production blurs the lines between art, science, and activism, and

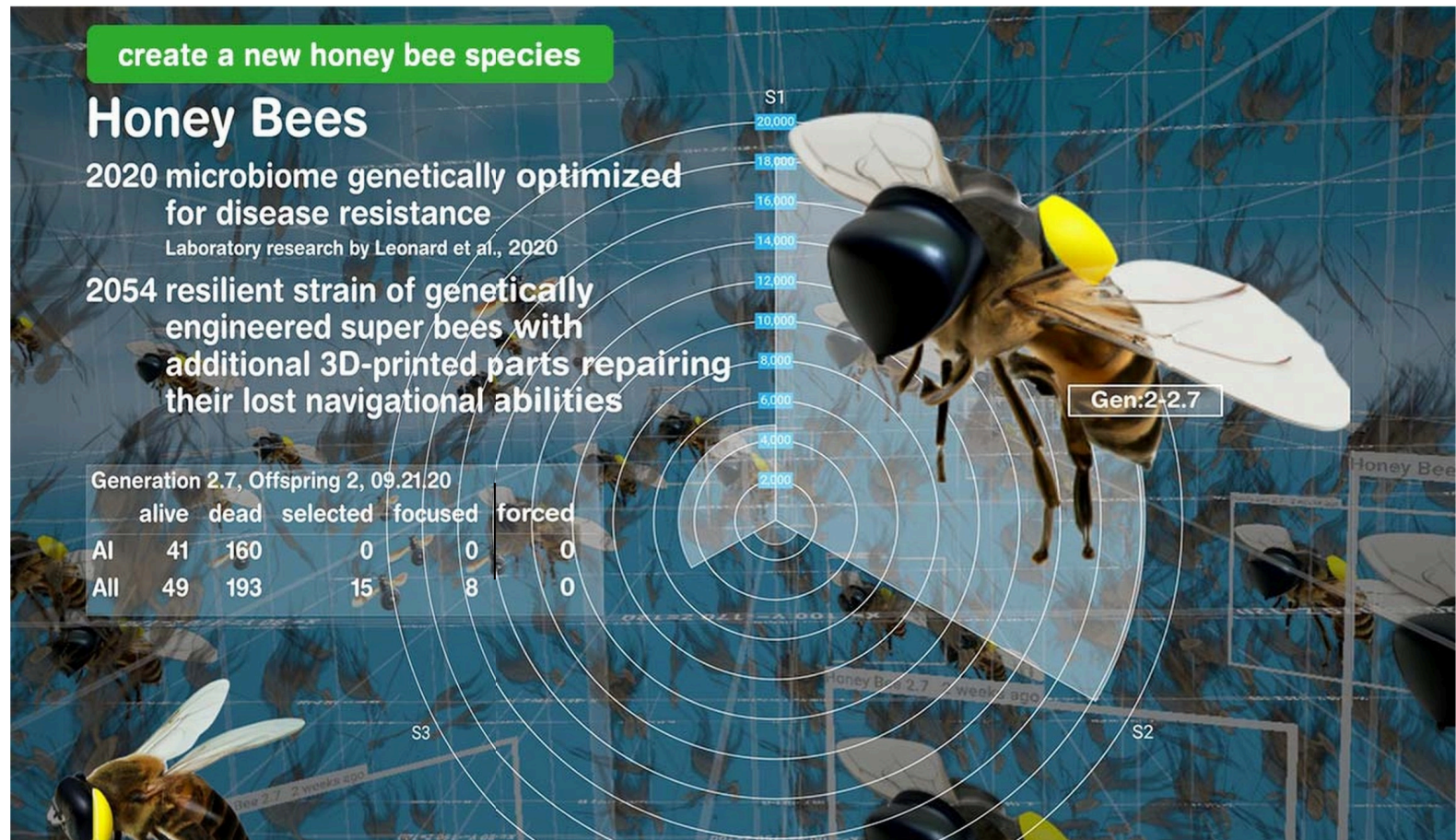
more specifically, *Used to Be My Home Too* elevates ecological discourse, creating such a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of all livings and our shared responsibility in preserving the planet. From the

pioneering environmental works of Richard Long to the immersive digital landscapes of Kelly Richardson, artists have long grappled with humanity's relationship to nature. As our planet teeters on the brink of ecological crisis,



reach, democratize participation, and foster virtual communities of art enthusiasts. The interplay between these realms enriches artistic discourse and invites viewers to engage in multifaceted ways. However, the work should be adapted to the medium. Here as example of how I did this with **Used to Be My Home Too**: In the physical exhibition space, there is a 45' or 50' screen that sits vertically on the floor at an angle. The work is not interactive, as this could distract the viewer from reflecting on the work thematically. **Used to Be My Home Too** can also be installed on your own computer at home (<https://marclee.io/en/used-to-be-my-home-too/>). There it is interactive. You can set filters. For example: only insect observations in New York; only observations of plants and fungi in Amazonia; or only observations from densely populated urban areas. Without this interactivity, you would be bored at home. But not in a museum.

**We have really appreciated the multifaceted nature of your artistic research and before leaving this stimulating conversation we would like to thank you for chatting with us and for sharing your thoughts, Marc. What projects are you currently working on, and what are some of the ideas that you hope to explore in the future?**

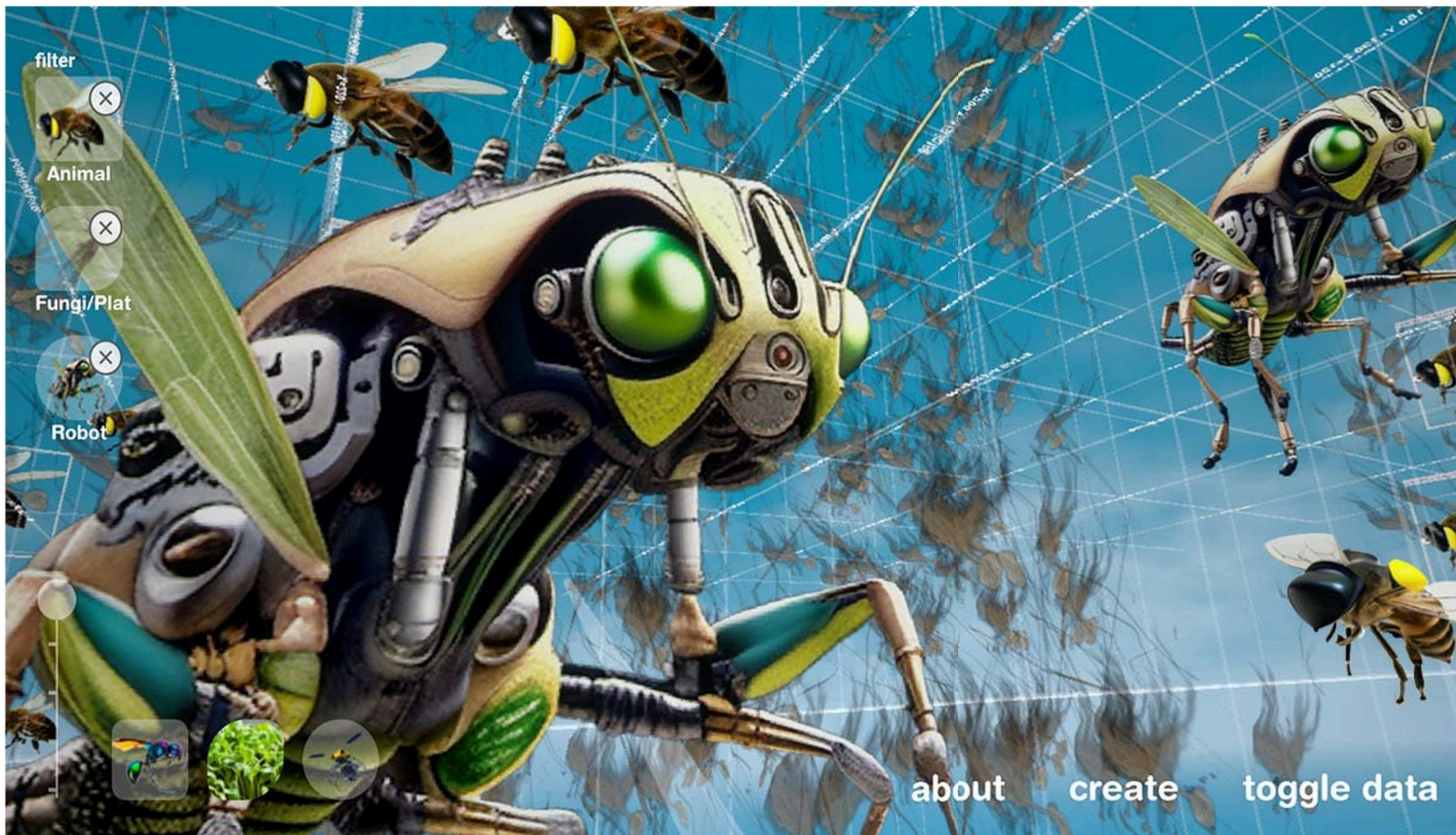


**Marc Lee:** Over the past three years, we've been working on a series of speculative simulations to imagine a future where AI balances our

ecosystem and how that might look. Machine learning technologies are already being used to identify, monitor and map species, and it's not hard to

imagine a not-too-distant future where AI agents balances an ecosystem. For that, we have just created a new mobile app **Speculative Evolution**, as an





where artificial intelligence and biotechnologies work together to create and optimize species to withstand the increasingly hostile environment. From the perspective of an AI simulator, the audience is invited to create new variations of animals, fungi, plants, and robots, fly with these engineered and mutated species, and observe the changing ecosystem.

**Speculative Evolution** responds to the trend of technology-assisted solution-making by constructing narratives of an uncomputable system under extreme control - what do we optimize, and what are we ignoring as a result? The project aims to inspect our tendency to simplify complex ecosystems by treating nature as a system that can be fixed.

An interview by **Ralph Landau**, curator and **Melissa C. Hilborn**, curator

[landescape@europe.com](mailto:landescape@europe.com)

interface for web-based installations, which can be downloaded for free from Google Play. (<https://marclee.io/en/speculative-evolution/>)

**Marc Lee:** Due to the threatening predictions of species extinction and global warming, scientists and farmers are increasingly relying on

technologies such as genetic engineering, synthetic biology and machine learning. Speculative Evolution imagines a speculative ecosystem 30 years from now,